THE·THIRTY·THREE PRINCIPLES OF·CHIROPRACTIC

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Ian Coulter, Ph.D., sociologist, past president of Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College and author of the book, "Chiropractic—A Philosophy for Alternative Health Care," offered an interesting analogy at the WFC/ACC Conference on Philosophy in Chiropractic Education in November 2000. He said that chiropractic philosophy was like a football that the chiropractic profession had caught at mid-field, and then instead of advancing it toward their own goal line or being driven back for a loss, had just put it down on the 50-yard line and sat on it for the last 70 years or so.

Well, you can imagine that, because I'm a chiropractic philosophy teacher, this remark 'got all over me,' as they say, but upon more careful reflection, I had to admit he had a point. Having dedicated the last two decades of my life to teaching the metaphysical fundamentals of chiropractic as I learned them from my philosophy teachers—Reggie Gold, Guy Riekeman, Doug Gates and Thom Gelardi, I find myself thinking that perhaps it is time someone picked up that football and started running with it.

To take Dr. Coulter's football analogy a step further, I remind myself that the game we are playing is more serious than a mere sport. It is the game of logical inquiry into the nature of the universe, and its goal is to understand the world we live in. And, as chiropractic philosophers, it is more specifically to understand what we are doing for our patients when we adjust them, and why it seems to have a greater significance than just helping them feel better for a while. So if I do pick up and run with the 'philosophic football,' it will be to attempt to advance it toward the 'goal line' of a better understanding of chiropractic's foundational concepts, and perhaps even to improve them.

This brings me to the "LIST OF THIRTY-THREE PRINCIPLES, NUMBERED AND NAMED" in R.W. Stephenson's "Chiropractic Textbook." When Stephenson compiled this list, he described it as "a number of principles which have been chosen for discussion in this book," nothing more. Yet over time this list of principles has assumed a far greater significance. For many chiropractors, especially those with a philosophic bent, these Principles have become a sort of catechism, a list of 'chiropractic commandments' to be studied, perhaps even memorized, and quoted (with proper reverence) when applicable. Some even designate themselves "Principled Chiropractors," and imply that Stephenson's are the Principles to which this distinction refers. What I would like to point out it that these Principles also form the outline of a connected, logical syllogism (extended argument) that can serve as chiropractic's raison d'être. It is in this light that I consider the Thirty-Three Principles, not to showcase their historic relevance, but to help illuminate, in the language of our time, the very contemporary relevance of these concepts, laid down 75 years ago in the language of that time.

To highlight their meaningfulness, I have done three things to Stephenson's original Principles. First I have categorized them into what I see as three natural categories. The initial principles concern the nature of organization in the universe at large, and form a model of the relationship between intelligence (the organizing principle) and matter. I call these the 'universal principles.' The next group of principles addresses the relationship between intelligence and matter in living things. These principles refer to the innate intelligence of life; I have labeled them the 'biological principles.' Lastly there are those few principles that refer specifically to chiropractic's focus on the relationship between the nerve system and the spinal column; I have termed these the 'chiropractic principles.'

Secondly, I have attempted to place the Principles in a logically derived order. One of the challenges of teaching these principles is that, although they clearly suggest a deductive argument, Stephenson did not necessarily arrange them in rigorous order. In the listing below I have freely reordered them in an attempt to relate premises to conclusions in the clearest fashion possible. For the reader's convenience, I have labeled each principle on my list with its original position on Stephenson's list.

Lastly, I have edited the language in which the concepts are worded, both to clarify some of the relationships between the concepts and to update them in light of more current physical, biological and chiropractic knowledge. A close comparison between each original principle and its proposed new form, with a discussion of the rationale for each change, will be the topic of a more extensive article I will publish soon in a peer-reviewed journal. Thus, without further ado, I invite you to consider the following:

THE UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES

1. **The Major Premise.** There is a universal intelligence in all matter, continuously giving to it all its properties and actions, thus maintaining it in existence, and giving this intelligence its expression. (1)

2. **Cause and Effect.** Every effect has a cause and every cause has effects. (17)

3. **The Principle of Time.** All processes require time. (6)

4. **No Organization Without the Effort of Force.** Matter can have no organization without the application of force by intelligence. (15)

5. **Universal Expression.** Force is manifested as organization in matter; all matter has organization, therefore there is universal intelligence expressed in all matter. (14)

6. **The Triune of Organization.** Any organized structure is a triunity having three necessary factors, namely intelligence, matter and the force which unites them. (4)

7. **The Amount of Intelligence in Matter.** The amount of intelligence for any given amount of matter is 100%, and is always proportional to its requirements. (7)

8. **The Function of Intelligence.** The function of intelligence is to create force. (8)

9. **The Amount of Force Created by Intelligence.** The amount of force created by intelligence is always 100%. (9)

10. **The Function of Force.** The function of force is to unite intelligence and matter. (10)

11. **The Function of Matter.** The function of matter is to express force. (13)

12. **The Character of Universal Forces.** The forces of universal intelligence are manifested as physical laws, are unswerving and unadapted, and have no solicitude for the structures in which they work. (11)

13. **Intelligence in Both Organic and Inorganic Matter.** Universal intelligence gives force to both organic and inorganic matter. (16)

14. **Interference with Transmission of Universal Forces.** There can be interference with the transmission of universal forces. (12)

THE BIOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

15. **Organic Matter.** The material of the body of a living thing is organized matter. (19)

16. **Innate Intelligence.** A living thing has the intelligence of the universe inborn within it, referred to as its innate intelligence. (20)

17. **The Chiropractic Meaning of Life.** The expression of this innate intelligence through matter is the Chiropractic meaning of "life." (2)

18. **The Triune of Life.** Life is necessarily the union of this intelligence and the matter of a living thing, brought about by the creation of specific internal (innate) forces. (3)

19. **Evidence of Life.** The signs of life (assimilation, elimination, growth, reproduction, adaptability) are evidence of the innate intelligence of life. (18)

20. **The Mission of Innate Intelligence.** The mission of the body's innate intelligence is to maintain the material of the body of a living thing in active organization. (21)

21. **The Perfection of the Triune.** In order to have 100% life, there must be 100% intelligence, 100% force, and 100% matter. (5)

22. **The Amount of Innate Intelligence.** There is 100% of innate intelligence in every living thing, the requisite amount, proportional to its organization. (22)

23. **The Function of Innate Intelligence.** The function of the body's innate intelligence is to adapt universal forces and matter for use in the body, so that all parts of the body will have coordinated action for mutual benefit. (23)

24. **The Principle of Coordination.** Coordination is the principle of harmonious interaction among all the parts of an organism, in fulfilling their functions and purposes. (32)

25. **The Limits of Adaptation.** The body's innate intelligence adapts forces and matter for the body's use as long as it can do so without breaking a universal law; in other words, its expression is limited by the limitations of matter and time. (24)

26. **The Normality of Innate Intelligence.** The body's innate intelligence is always normal and its function is always normal. (27)

27. **The Character of Innate Forces.** The forces the body's innate intelligence creates are never intended to injure or destroy the living thing in which they work. (25)

28. **Comparison of Universal and Innate Forces.** In order to carry on the universal cycle of life, universal forces are destructive, unless they can be adapted, whereas innate forces are always constructive, as regards a specific living thing. (26)

29. **Interference with Transmission of Innate Forces.** There can be interference with the transmission of innate forces. (29)

30. **The Causes of Dis-ease.** Interference with the transmission of innate forces causes incoordination, or "dis-ease." (30)

THE CHIROPRACTIC PRINCIPLES

31. **The Conductors of Innate Forces.** Some of the forces the body's innate intelligence creates operate through or over the nerve system in animal bodies. (28)

32. **The Law of Demand and Supply.** The Law of Demand and Supply exists in the body in its ideal state; wherein the nerves transmit messages from the body, concerning its needs, to the brain, which acts as the central processing unit for the body's innate intelligence, and from the brain to the body to meet those needs. (33)

33. **Subluxations.** Interference with transmission in the body is often directly or indirectly due to subluxations in the spinal column. (31)

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